

Town of Clifton & Town of Fine

Efficiency/Consolidation Study Committee Meeting

Meeting #5 – 5/27/2015 @ 6:00 p.m. @ the Town of Fine Municipal Building

Minutes

1. Attendees: Roger Folsom, Mark Hall, Sherm Craig, Brian Donovan, Chris Westbrook, Sue Westbrook, Chuck Hooven, Kelly Smith, Cory Perrault, Dan Kerr, Dean Kerr, Phil Towne, Mike Dolan, Rick Rusaw, Carrie Tuttle, Star Carter
2. Third Topic: Fire Protection & Rescue Services; PowerPoint Presentation given by Carrie Tuttle and Star Carter (DANC). Representatives from each of the four Town fire districts/departments were present and provided input on the presentation; Mike Dolan (Cranberry Lake), Phil Towne (Newton Falls), Dean and Dan Kerr (Fine), and Rick Rusaw (Star lake).
3. The Committee and guests provided feedback on the presentation. C. Tuttle will update the PowerPoint with comments received and circulate it to the Committee for final review before posting on the website.
 - Committee requested that the values of equipment and buildings be added for each Fire District.
4. Discussion between the Committee and Fire Representatives followed: A summary follows:
 - Representatives from the Fire districts/departments agreed to work together over the upcoming months to develop recommendations to bring back to the committee which could include consolidation of some of the 8 different taxing areas that presently exist within the 2 towns for fire and rescue services and a reduction in the administrative complexity.
 - M. Dolan explained that costs are continuing to increase and that there are several factors that are impacting the equipment needed to provide services. For example, he said that boats are not entering Cranberry Lake that are in excess of \$100,000 and these vessels require a different level of equipment to stop a fire than that of a smaller vessel which has been more typically seen on the lake in the past.
 - The Fire/Rescue representatives explained that the cost of turn out gear and air packs are also increasing and that a single Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA)

costs approximately \$7,000 and they have a finite life and require annual testing. Also pumper trucks can be several hundreds of thousands of dollars to replace.

- Fire/Rescue representatives also explained some of the complexity of the issues that they face in Clifton and Fine and how their issues are different from many of the neighboring communities. For example, there are many remote areas within the Towns and Wanakena does not have a public water system that provides fire protection and is considered remote being ~8 miles from Star Lake and Cranberry Lake. To fight fires in regions where a sufficient potable water source is not readily available through fire hydrants, ice auguring equipment must be used in the winter to provide access. Boats access from Cranberry may also be used to fire a fire in Wanakena (weather access dependent of course). Also, extreme weather, snow, and remote wilderness areas where people snow mobile and hike create other challenges for fire and rescue.

- The Committee asked about the number and stability of volunteers that comprise staff of fire department. Fire/Rescue Representatives explained that the number of trained volunteers is stable now; however the volunteer base is aging, requirements are continuing to increase putting additional demands on volunteers' time, and it will continue to be challenging to meet the requirements with unpaid staff going forward; especially when it comes to EMTs. Training is difficult for volunteers to attend because it is not often held locally and is a large time commitment. M. Dolan relayed that some municipalities relatively close (i.e., Long Lake and Natural Bridge) have transitioned to paid services. He applied for a grant recently to fund 6 people for 10 hours per day 5 days per week at a cost of approximately \$400,000 per year which also included some administrative costs. The award notification will likely be made in late summer. If the grant is awarded the Town could hire the staff as custodians and allow them to have leave from work if an emergency call-out occurs. At that point, they would transition to a volunteer status. In this scenario, it would minimize the workers' compensation insurance premiums. R. Rusaw mentioned that Star Lake also wrote a grant application to fund rope rescue equipment. Both districts noted that many of the areas they serve require specialty equipment and services to properly respond.

- The Committee asked about the potential for bringing in additional revenue by charging insurance companies for rescue calls. M. Dolan responded that he thought that policy change could provide additional revenue to cover some equipment but it would not cover the cost of paid personnel.

- With the loss of local jobs, many potential volunteers now work out of town and are not available during the day to respond to calls. Additionally, the population is decreasing in Clifton and Fine but in many surrounding Towns it remains steady. The Committee commented that these issues are some of the reasons that the Towns are completing this study in the first place as there is a need to do something different to make government more efficient and keep taxes manageable for residents while still providing critical services.
- The Fire/Rescue Representatives commented that there have been a lot of improvements in the working relationships between the Departments in the last 7-8 years and operationally they work very well together.
- The Fire/Rescue Representatives noted that although they may have fewer volunteers now then they have in the past, the volunteers they do have are better trained.
- The Committee asked about ways to incentivize volunteers. M. Dolan explained that there are many incentive programs and they vary greatly from state to state. Some include substantial income tax credits, but administratively the incentives can be complex and administratively prohibitive to manage.
- The Committee asked whether it was possible to work cooperatively with the hospital to provide training. This appears to be a possibility that could be explored, particularly when it comes to Advanced Life Support. Additionally, the Departments may need to share an ALS provider to meet requirements as the number of volunteers with this training continues to decline and they may not have any ALS trained volunteers at some point in the future.

5. The future meeting schedule was reviewed. C. Tuttle mentioned that the next meeting will be on June 24th and the topic that will be covered will include “Other Services” such as Library, Arena, Golf Course, Dog Control, Court, Code Enforcement, Assessor, etc.

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| Kick Off Meeting | January 28, 2015 |
| Demographics & Taxes | February 25, 2015 |
| Services Provided: Highway Department Part I | March 25, 2015 |
| Services Provided: Highway Department Part II | April 22, 2015 |
| Services Provided: Fire Department | May 27, 2015 |
| Services Provided: Other – Library, Arena, Golf Course, Dog Control, Court, etc. | June 24, 2015 |
| Services Provided: Water/Sewer | July 22, 2015 |

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| Personnel & Personnel Functions | August 26, 2015 |
| Budgets | September 23, 2015 |
| Draft "Existing Conditions/What Exist" Report & | Oct. 2015 – Dec. 2015 |
| Informational Meeting #1 | January 2016 |
| Evaluation of Alternatives | Feb. 2016 – June 2016 |
| Public Informational Meeting #2 | July 2016 |
| Recommendations & Final Report | August 2016 |
| Public Information Meeting/Hearing | September 2016 |